



Disaster and Emergency Management Resources

Pest Control Following a Disaster

Rats and Rodents

- Following floods, rats and other rodents may move into buildings to escape floodwaters. Rats can carry disease and parasites.
- Because of the danger of rat infestation, use caution when entering flooded buildings.
- Inspect likely hiding places for rats including closets, drawers, upholstered furniture, dark corners, and basements.
- Be extremely careful when approaching rats. They may be aggressive.
- If rats continue to be a problem after floodwaters recede, contact your county Extension agent or professional pest control operator for advice.
- Remove trash piles and piles of damaged furniture or equipment. Store materials on platforms or shelves 12 to 18 inches above the ground.
- Remove food sources. Store food supplies in rat-proof bins or containers.
- If you are bitten by a rat, wash the wound with soap and water and see a doctor immediately. Rats may carry diseases, and, at the very least, rat bites can cause infection. If the rat is captured or killed, health authorities may wish to check it for rabies or other diseases.

Insects

- After a flood, mosquitoes, flies, and other insects may be more abundant than usual, posing potential health problems.
- Filth and debris left by the storm create excellent breeding conditions for houseflies and mosquitoes, some of which may be capable of spreading typhoid, dysentery, and West Nile Virus.
- The key to controlling insects is removing their breeding places; any standing water, especially stagnant water. In warm weather this should be done immediately after you return to the premises.
- Empty water from barrels, old tires, cans, and other containers. In addition to being a breeding place for insects, this water may be polluted by floodwaters. Check clogged gutters.
- Drain ponds, pools, or any standing water in which mosquitoes may breed.

- If possible, keep small children indoors, especially in the evening. If you must go outside at dusk, use a repellent on exposed parts of your body and clothing.

Snakes

- Following floods, snakes are often forced into places where they are not usually found.
- West Virginia has two types of poisonous snakes, the copperhead and the timber rattlesnake. All snakes can bite.
- Remember that snakes are beneficial to the ecosystem and should not be killed indiscriminately.
- Be alert for snakes in unusual places. They may be found in or around homes, barns, outbuildings, piles of debris, building materials, and trash.
- Before beginning rescue or cleanup operations, search the premises thoroughly for snakes. Wear heavy leather or rubber high-top boots, and heavy gloves.
- Use rakes, pry bars, or other long-handled tools when removing debris. Never expose your hands, feet, or other parts of your body where a snake might be.
- Keep a heavy stick or long-handled tool handy. After dark, carry a strong light.
- Explain to children the dangers of snakes during storm or flood conditions and the precautions they should follow. Do not allow children to play around debris.
- If you kill a poisonous snake, use a stick, rake, or other long-handled tool to carry it away for disposal.
- If you realize you are near a snake, remain still; sudden movements may cause the snake to strike. If the snake doesn't move away from you after a few minutes, slowly back away from it.
- If a poisonous snake bites someone, call a doctor immediately.
- To minimize chances of finding snakes indoors, block openings where they might enter buildings. Snakes can pass through extremely small openings and usually enter near or below ground level.

Adapted from resource material developed by the University of Wisconsin-Extension entitled "The Disaster Handbook for Extension Agents"